

# **SAR Line Officer Training Transcript**

## Suspicious Activity Reporting—Line Officer Training

This training is designed to:

- Increase your awareness of the Nationwide Suspicious Activity Reporting or (SAR) Initiative (NSI).
- Enhance your understanding of the behaviors associated with pre-incident terrorism activities.
- Convey the significance of your role in documenting and reporting suspicious activity.
- Emphasize the importance of protecting privacy, civil rights, and civil liberties as you document and share information.

You are the nation's strongest force in the fight against terrorism. As a frontline law enforcement officer, you are trained to recognize behaviors and activities that are suspicious, and your daily duties position you to observe and report these suspicious behaviors and activities.

Like other criminals, terrorists engage in precursor actions to carry out their plot for destruction. They make plans, acquire materials, engage in intelligence collection, and often commit other criminal activities in support of their plan. These actions produce activities or behaviors that may be suspicious, indicators of what may lie ahead, or possible pieces to a larger puzzle. By identifying, documenting, and sharing information regarding suspicious behaviors and activities that have a potential terrorism nexus, we will all be better prepared to prevent future terrorist attacks in our communities.

## **SAR Line Officer Training Transcript**

The NSI establishes a capacity for sharing terrorism and related criminal activity SARs. The SAR process focuses on what law enforcement has been doing for years—gathering, documenting, processing, analyzing, and sharing information regarding suspicious activity. The NSI is designed to share and analyze the information you observe and report each day with other information gathered across the nation in an effort to detect and disrupt terrorist activity.

How do you identify terrorism behavior? Anyone can be a terrorist. The key is NOT to focus on Who—the race, ethnicity, gender, or religious beliefs of those we think might be involved in suspicious activities—but rather to focus on identifying the behaviors. When observing behaviors, officers need to take into account the totality of circumstances—such as What, Where, When, and How.

SARs focus on observed behaviors and incidents reasonably indicative of preoperational planning related to terrorism or other criminal activity. These activities are suspicious based upon:

- What—the observable behaviors

- Where—the location of specific activities

- When—the timelines of events

- How—the tools and methods

Previous terrorism events have been reviewed and analyzed for commonalities. The result is a compilation of indicators and behaviors that were present in previous terrorist events. Although these behaviors do not mean that someone is definitely engaged in criminal or terrorist activity,

## **SAR Line Officer Training Transcript**

they do provide justification for further analysis. The following types of suspicious activity are examples of potential terrorism-related behaviors that should be documented when observed.

- Breach or attempted intrusion of a restricted area by unauthorized persons, such as using false credentials to access government buildings or military installations.
- Misrepresentation or presentation of false documents or identification to cover illicit activity, such as stolen or counterfeit identification or fraudulent warrants, subpoenas, or liens.
- Theft, loss, or diversion of materials associated with a facility or structure, such as stolen badges, uniforms, or emergency vehicles that are proprietary to a facility.
- Sabotage, tampering, or vandalism of a facility or protected site, such as arson or damage committed at a research or industrial facility.
- Expressed or implied threat to damage or compromise a facility or structure, such as written or verbal threats against individuals, groups, or targets.
- Eliciting information beyond curiosity about a facility's or building's purpose, operations, or security, such as attempts to obtain specific information about personnel or occupants, equipment, or training related to the security of a facility.
- Testing or probing of security to reveal physical, personnel, or cyber security capabilities, such as repeated false alarms intended to test law enforcement response time and rehearse procedures.
- Material acquisition or storage of unusual quantities of materials, such as weapons, cell phones, pagers, fuel, chemicals, toxic materials, and timers.

## **SAR Line Officer Training Transcript**

- Photography, observation, or surveillance of facilities, buildings, or critical infrastructure and key resources beyond casual, tourism, or artistic interest, to include facility access points, staff or occupants, or security measures.

Photography and other similar activities are protected activities unless connected to other suspicious activities that would indicate potential terrorism. This may cause the officer to conduct additional observation or gather additional information—again taking into account the totality of circumstances.

Protecting the privacy, civil rights, and civil liberties of Americans is critical to preserving our democratic principles and to building trust between law enforcement and the people we serve. Only by building trust will we achieve a level of citizen cooperation with law enforcement that will maximize our ability to keep our communities and our nation safe and secure from crime and terrorism.

As you document and report these or other types of suspicious activity, protection of privacy, civil rights, and civil liberties is paramount. Just as you do in your other daily law enforcement duties, you must:

- Collect information in a lawful manner.
- Protect the rights of the individual.
- Avoid collecting information protected by the Bill of Rights.
- Ensure information is as accurate as possible.

## **SAR Line Officer Training Transcript**

Profiling of individuals based on their race, color, national origin, or religion is not acceptable in reporting terrorism-related suspicious activity, just as it is not acceptable in other law enforcement actions. Remember, First Amendment rights to free speech, religion, assembly, and so forth ensure that people can express their beliefs and take other protected actions without government intrusion. Protection of privacy, civil rights, and civil liberties is a fundamental principle that underlies the Nationwide SAR Initiative.

The Nationwide SAR Cycle starts with you and depends on involvement from all levels of law enforcement to ensure that information gathered on the street reaches all appropriate stakeholders.

Every state and many major metropolitan areas have developed intelligence fusion centers to make sure that terrorism and other criminal information is analyzed and forwarded to the appropriate jurisdiction for follow-up investigation.

When you collect and document suspicious activity information, that information is routed to your supervisor and others for evaluation in accordance with your departmental policy. SAR information is then entered into a local, regional, state, or federal system and submitted to a fusion center for review by a trained analyst or investigator. The reviewer determines whether the information has a nexus to terrorism and meets the criteria for sharing nationwide. If so, it is forwarded to the Federal Bureau of Investigation Joint Terrorism Task Force (JTTF) for investigative follow-up.

## **SAR Line Officer Training Transcript**

Remember, the information you collect and provide **is valued** and **will be** reviewed to determine whether there is a potential nexus to terrorism.

Imagine the following scenario. Early one Sunday morning on a rural highway, a car with an out-of-state tag is pulled over for a traffic violation. The officer approaches the car and observes a passenger hurriedly folding down the screen of a laptop computer. The officer also notices that the driver is displaying nervous behavior and making halting responses to questions. The officer asks permission to search the vehicle, and the occupants agree to the search. When the officer asks whether there is anything in the car he should know about, the men tell him there are fireworks in the trunk. In the trunk, the officer finds an array of legal items—such as potassium nitrate, gasoline, PVC pipes, hobby rocket launchers and fuses, a GPS unit, a receipt for tools and ammunition, cat litter, and other items—that could be used for destructive purposes.

Suspicious? Absolutely. This scenario is real and occurred in August 2007 in Goose Creek, South Carolina, near a military prison where enemy combatants were held. In this situation, the officer relied upon his training and law enforcement experience and reported this information as suspicious. The subsequent investigation led to coordination between the FBI JTTF, the South Carolina Fusion Center, and the fusion center in Florida, where the suspects originated. The fusion centers worked with the FBI JTTF and U.S. Department of Homeland Security, and the resulting investigation led to the arrest of both subjects for possession of a destructive device. The investigation revealed that the subjects had uploaded training videos on the Internet demonstrating methods to turn remote-controlled cars into bomb detonators. Their stated purpose was to teach "martyrdoms" and "suiciders" how to save themselves so they could

## **SAR Line Officer Training Transcript**

continue to fight the U.S. military in Arab countries. Ultimately, the subjects were indicted on charges including providing material support to terrorist organizations.

The officer in this situation was key to this case. By observing and reporting suspicious behaviors based upon the totality of circumstances—What, Where, When, and How—the officer was able to thwart a potential terrorist attack.

These situations are happening around our country every day. Analysis of 25 recent disrupted terrorist plots indicates that 80 percent were foiled as a result of initial police action—observing, reporting, and properly acting on behaviors of concern. Local law enforcement’s capacity to collect suspicious activity information is an example of how everyday police work serves as a force multiplier in the fight against terrorism.

Consider the following examples:

- 1988—A New Jersey State Trooper noticed an individual acting suspiciously at a rest stop on the New Jersey Turnpike. The individual, Japanese Red Army terrorist Yū Kikumura, was arrested for carrying three 18-inch (46-cm) pipe bombs loaded with gunpowder. Prosecutors alleged that Kikumura had planned to bomb a military recruitment office in New York City.
- 1995—An Oklahoma State Trooper made a traffic stop on a vehicle with no license plate, and as a result, bomber Timothy McVeigh was arrested.
- 1999—A U.S. Customs agent in Washington State conducted a search of a car after noticing suspicious activity, which resulted in the arrest of Ahmed Ressam. Ressam was

## **SAR Line Officer Training Transcript**

convicted of plotting to bomb the Los Angeles International Airport as part of his Millennium Plot.

- 2003—A police officer in Murphy, North Carolina, conducted a routine check of a business, which resulted in the arrest of Eric Robert Rudolph.
- 2003—Local police in Seminole, Florida, responded to a domestic dispute and discovered weapons and a mission statement for an attack on an Islamic Center. As a result, Robert Goldstein was arrested and convicted of plotting an attack.
- 2007—Local police in Mount Laurel, New Jersey, responded to a tip from a Circuit City employee regarding a video. A group had given the employee a videotape to burn to DVD that contained footage of members firing weapons and calling for a jihad. As a result, members of the group were investigated, arrested, and convicted of plotting to attack service members at the Fort Dix Army Base in New Jersey.
- 2009—One of the most serious terrorist plots since September 11, 2001, was disrupted when authorities arrested Najibullah Zazi on charges of conspiring to use weapons of mass destruction as he was plotting to detonate bombs in the New York City commuter trains.

These are just a handful of incidents that demonstrate how terrorists remain committed to harming Americans and how they are actively planning their attacks. This is powerful evidence that we must remain committed to detecting and documenting suspicious activities to identify and disrupt terrorist plots before they result in devastation and destruction.



## **SAR Line Officer Training Transcript**

You are a part of an 800,000-member force of police officers. With eyes and ears on our streets and working with citizens and communities every day, you are not only a First Responder, you are a First Preventer. By collecting, documenting, and reporting information regarding suspicious behaviors, incidents, and other activity associated with crime, including terrorism, you are a fundamental part of the Nationwide SAR Initiative and the prevention of terrorism.

We hope this training has:

- Increased your awareness of the Nationwide SAR Initiative.
- Enhanced your understanding of the behaviors associated with pre-incident terrorism activities.
- Conveyed the significance of your role in documenting and reporting suspicious activity.
- Emphasized the importance of protecting privacy, civil rights, and civil liberties as you document and share information.

With your help, the Nationwide SAR Initiative will succeed and terrorist acts against our homeland will be prevented.